



HISTORY WEST

PUBLISHED BY THE ROYAL WESTERN AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

December 2024



New premises – on our way to settlement 109 Stirling Highway, Nedlands

This is the formal announcement you have been waiting for. We have a new home. Two presentation sessions were held late last month to introduce members and donors to our new premises – a History West Community Centre. These sessions were run as soon as we had completed ‘due diligence’ and knew that a settlement date was in sight. By Christmas we will have purchased our new premises and sold our present headquarters at 49 Broadway. It is an exciting and daunting prospect as we prepare for the big move.

Many volunteers have been involved in planning the interior to house our museum, library, bookshop, and administration. There will be a separate community hall for our general meetings, talks, workshops and other activities. And some surprises.

Grateful thanks go to Maria Gillman, our Hon. Architect, for her assistance throughout the process. We are also very appreciative of a member’s further significant donation towards the cost of the required fit out. However, we are still looking for support. We will hold a members’ viewing day in January to have a ‘before’ look around. Our present property will remain our headquarters, probably with restricted access as we pack, until at least March while the new fit out and transition takes place.

The success of the years-long search for a new property has been made possible by constant fundraising, the large donation from the MJW Foundation and the generous support of Lotterywest. We have also benefitted from finding an accommodating buyer for 49 Broadway, who is happy for us to stay on as tenants for a few months after the sale has gone through. Thanks to them all.

It is a new beginning for the Society, so stay involved and come with us all for the ride. We will have a goodbye to 49 Broadway, and take away many good memories with us.

Richard Offen, President & Sally Anne Hasluck, Vice-President & Chair HWCC Committee

Holiday Closure

From Thursday 19 December 2024 at 4pm — re-opening in 2025 to be advised

The Royal WA Historical Society (Inc.) | 49 Broadway | NEDLANDS Western Australia 6009
TELEPHONE: (08) 9386 3841 | FACSMILE: (08) 9386 3309 | EMAIL: admin@histwest.org.au
FACEBOOK: [facebook.com/histwest](https://www.facebook.com/histwest) | WEB: www.histwest.org.au | ABN: 43 607 110 473
LIBRARY EMAIL: library@histwest.org.au | MUSEUM EMAIL: museum@histwest.org.au

Forthcoming Events — Don't forget to book!

Or ring the office 9386 3841 admin@histwest.org.au

HISTORY IN THE CITY



**Citiplace Conference Room, Perth Rwy
Station Concourse**

Wednesday 4 December, 2pm

Garry Lawrence

**The Old Mill Theatre — Mary Poppins Jr;
Breaker Morant; Star Shrek; Picnic At
Hanging Rock; A Christmas Carol**

What do the listed titles have in common? Several might be better known as major films but in South Perth they are all shows performed this year at the Old Mill Theatre by talented teams of actors. Like the changing role of actors in plays, the Old Mill Theatre has had several very different roles since it was opened in 1899. There is a rumour of a resident ghost! This talk comes shortly before a performance of *Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol* at the theatre.

Garry Lawrence will share a potted history of this heritage-listed building and entertain you with some of the many stories that come with such an old building.

CHRISTMAS PARTY



Come and celebrate with us

Christmas Party

**at the Mosman Park Bowling Club
39 Bayview Terrace**

Wed 11 December 2024, 6-8pm

Cost \$45 per person
Canapés & first drink included

As always there will be a fantastic
Christmas raffle, tickets \$5 each

Your support on the night will be appreciated

RSVP Monday 2 December 2024

[Click here to book](#)



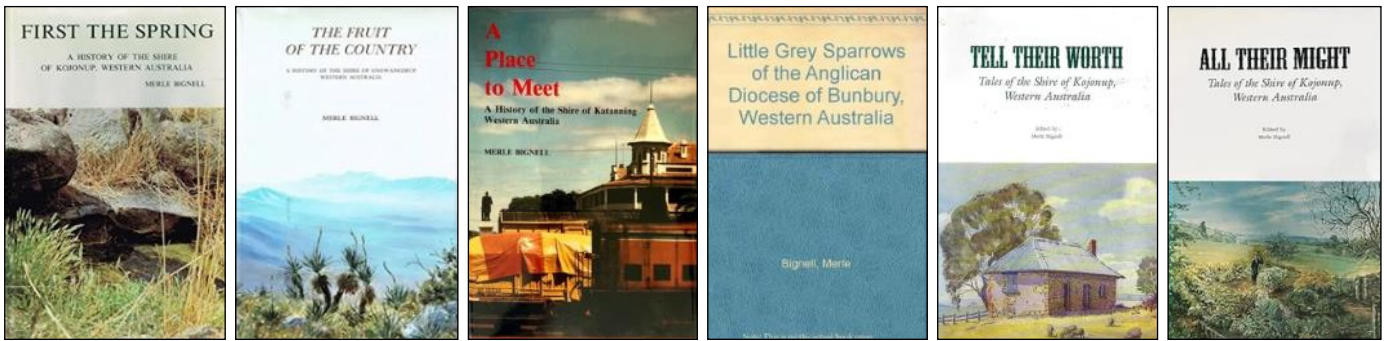
**Happy Christmas,
Happy New Year and
Happy Holidays!**

**The Society wishes you
season's greetings and
a joyful summertime!**

This year we feature the wildflower
paintings in Emily Pelloe's
Wildflowers of Western Australia
(C J DeGaris Publishing, 1921)
– from the Society's rare books collection



Merle Bignell OAM Fellow RWAHS (1927-2024)



Mrs Merle Bignell's long life has ended. We remember her and acknowledge with gratitude the contribution she made to Western Australian history. Her name is synonymous with the history of the Great Southern district, which was her long-term home. She is the author of six local histories that record the development of Kojonup and the Great Southern, and the lives of those who settled there.

First the Spring: A History of the Shire of Kojonup Western Australia (UWAP for Kojonup Shire Council, 1971).

The Fruit of the Country: A History of the Shire of Gnowangerup Western Australia (UWAP for Shire of Gnowangerup, 1977).

A Place to Meet: A History of the Shire of Katanning Western Australia (UWAP for Shire of Katanning, 1981).

Little Grey Sparrows of the Anglican Diocese of Bunbury, Western Australia (UWAP, Crawley, 1995).

Tell Their Worth: Tales of the Shire of Kojonup [ed.] (Kojonup Historical Society, 1997).

All Their Might: Tales of the Shire of Kojonup [ed.] (Kojonup Historical Society, 2001).

These histories, published in the last thirty years of the 20th century, provide a series of well-researched and interesting accounts of how the district came to be, the forces that shaped it, and many of the families and individuals who settled there. Merle provided these farming communities with well-evidenced and reliable accounts of the agricultural development of their district, the hard work of the settlers, their economic challenges and opportunities, and the creation of prosperous rural communities. *Little Grey Sparrows of the Anglican Diocese of Bunbury* was something of a departure in its focus on the Sisters of the Order of St Elizabeth of Hungary who served the Bunbury, Busselton and Margaret River communities as social workers for thirty years from 1928 to 1957 through the rigours of group settlement, depression and war. They are a fascinating but now largely unknown part of WA's history.

Merle trained as a teacher, majoring in History at the University of WA and was appointed to Katanning State School in 1949. She married a Kojonup farmer and became part of the life of the community and its premier local historian. She was foundation secretary of the Kojonup Historical Society which first met in 1962 and was later made an honorary life member in recognition of her contribution to the district's history. Her significant achievements as an historian were also recognised by the RWAHS when she was made a Fellow of the Society in 2000. Also in 2000 Merle was awarded an OAM in the Queen's Birthday honours list – 'For service to the preservation of local history, particularly through the Kojonup Historical Society, and as an author, researcher and editor'.

At the age of 92 in 2020 Merle responded to *History West's* appeal for members to record their experience of the COVID lock down. She wrote of two farmer neighbours in the West Arthur/Wagin district. Each working day these two women rose at 6am, made a flask of coffee, and walked approximately 2 km to meet at their boundary. Here they had a good chat over the fence, as they both enjoyed their coffee. Afterwards they walked home. One of the women checked the sheep as she walked. 'As a result she starts the day no longer feeling totally isolated; has had some exercise; and checked some of her flock. I regard this as brilliant', Merle wrote.

Not allowing an opportunity to promote her district to pass, she added a codicil to her report for the Society's volunteers:

May I recommend the West Arthur area for a day trip.

It has a history that goes back to the old Albany-to-Perth Coach days when it was a thriving centre, long before the building of the Great Southern Railway (1889). Some of its original buildings survive but mostly are ignored by the motoring public rushing north and south. Of particular interest is St Paul's Anglican Church which has been lovingly restored and where services are still held. More than that, it is surrounded by a venerated graveyard where the names of old identities can be found and which continues to be used.

We have not followed up on the day trip advice but members travelling by car through the district are recommended to do so — perhaps during this upcoming holiday period.

Mrs Merle Bignell's was a life well lived.

Community Talks

Two York women reflect on Aboriginal and settler women's lives

Carol Littlefair & Marion Kickett



Janet Millett



Holy Trinity Church, York



Young Marion



Three men at the camp

There was a full house for October's talk which explored the lives of two York women. **Carol Littlefair**, Arts and Cultural Heritage Officer for the Shire of York, began with a fascinating exploration of the York life of a 19th century colonial visitor Mrs Janet Millett, as told in her book *An Australian Parsonage* (1872). Mrs Millett's insights into everyday life and her interactions with local Aboriginal people are unique and fascinating. She was the wife of Edward Millett, colonial chaplain to Holy Trinity Church in York (1864-1869). Carol showed us images of the Old Convict Road along which Mrs Millett travelled, the church and parsonage she came to, the heavy dress she wore, the town she arrived at, and her observations of the environment, native animals, and people and activities she observed. This history was told visually via a series of images explored and explained by Carol. Those in the audience who knew York well were particularly delighted with this visual re-visit.

Carol was followed by **Dr Marion Kickett**, a Balardong-Whadjuk woman who spent the first ten years of her life on the York Native Reserve. Marion's was a very personal history of her remembered life on the Reserve and the crucial role her mother played in ensuring the family stayed together and avoided the threat of the children's removal by A O Neville's Dept of Native Affairs. Marion recalled that he was nicknamed 'The Devil'. To tell her story Marion also used a series of images of life on the Reserve, personal photographs taken by her family with a Box Brownie camera. She recalled the restrictions under which the family lived — for instance, Aboriginal people needed identity papers to enter York and welfare surveillance was an ever-present threat. Her central memory, however, is of her mother's resilience in holding her family together and living the best life the family could by making sure everything was done to avoid welfare intervention. It probably isn't a surprise to learn that Marion's doctoral thesis at UWA was written on the subject of — resilience.

Marion is a keeper of knowledge who now guide others in Barladong Noongar culture. She conducts tours of the former York Native Reserve and is writing a book about her life. Perhaps some of you were lucky enough to attend *Wundig Wer Wilura*, an opera staged earlier this year at His Majesty's and based on an ancient Noongar story of star-crossed lovers who broke lore and custom and faced the ultimate punishment — a Romeo and Juliet story some have described it. Marion shared this dreaming story, told to her by her father, of how the lovers were transformed into Mount Brown and Mount Bakewell, facing each other but forever separated.

Historical Panoramas

Andrew Woods

In September we were delighted to welcome Associate Professor Andrew Woods, manager of the Curtin University HIVE, to take us on a visual journey into Western Australia's past through the lens of wide-angle panoramic images. Originally trained as an engineer, Andrew has used his considerable technical skills together with an interest in mapping and history, to create an amazing website titled —

Old Perth <https://www.oldperth.org.au/>

Andrew told of stitching a number of panoramas together and the use of drones to create a more comprehensive map. You are invited to help improve the map if you spot a deficiency. The website explains how you can go about providing feedback to the website designers.

The website links the State Library WA's amazing collection of historic photographs of Perth to the HIVE's digital map of Perth to create a site for all visitors to visit at will, exploring Perth in particular periods, the changing face of the city and the appearance and disappearance of individual buildings.

It is excellent site to browse and to research, enabling viewers to visualise past landscapes.

For a tour of both the Perth and Fremantle panoramas visit —

Historical Panoramas <https://www.historicalpanoramas.com.au/>

Andrew's team has tracked down more than 100 panoramas from around the State, 50 of the goldfields and 25 of Albany. So we can all look forward to the history of other places to be told through digital imagery.



Community Talk

New Statues — Exploring their place and meaning

Panel — Jenny Gregory, Barbara Dundas, Suzanne John, Alison Atkinson-Phillips

Our August panel chairperson Em. Prof. **Jenny Gregory** published an article in 2021 titled ‘Dark Pasts in the Landscape: Statue Wars in Western Australia’ in which she wrote:

Statues are not simply timeless stone or bronze images, obsolete survivals from the past. They are animated by collective memory as it continually reconstructs the past according to the beliefs and needs of the present.

Jenny looked at the disagreement and protests that arose in the 1970s-1980s around the new statues of Governor Stirling and Noongar leader Yagan, highlighting the changing attitudes to the colonial statues that dot our landscape. Should they be torn down or relocated or re-captioned or simply left as markers of a past necessarily different from today? Our contemporary views differ on this question.

Yet, as a society, we continue to erect new statues. Driven by our ‘collective memory’ we work to construct in public places physical reminders of people and events which we value. This subject of new statues was the focus of our Community Talk panel. We invited three speakers who have been centrally involved in the erection of new statues around Perth to speak about ‘their’ statue. What passion drove its erection? What does it mean to those who have worked to erect it?



10th Light Horse Regiment statue, Guildford



Edith Cowan on the Terrace



Fanny Balbuk Yooreel in Government House garden

Barbara Dundas spoke of the 10th Light Horse statue which was erected in Stirling Square community memorial park in Guildford in 2023. It was very much a local community initiative and recognised the connection of the 10th Light Horse with Guildford: the regiment was formed there in 1914 and trained there. Members of the local community remembered and resolved that the statue would be a visible acknowledgement of the honour and respect in which the regiment is still held. It was a slow and laborious process, taking six years in all. Most important was to honour the courage of the troopers and the special bond between the men and their horses. All details of man and horse had to be accurate. The sculpture depicts a light horseman emerging from the Helena River at the Guildford Depot.

Suzanne John, who is a member of the team working to erect a statue to ‘trailblazing feminist politician’ Edith Cowan outside Anzac House in St Georges Terrace, also stressed the determination needed to erect a new statue. It is no easy or quick task. Anzac House provides a home for the Karrakatta Club and the RSL, both of which Edith Cowan helped found. This statue is privately funded but took some time to find a home in the streets of Perth. Suzanne pointed to the absence of women commemorated in public statues.

In Australia, only 3% of public statues are of women.

There are more sculptural images of animals than there are of women.

The statue of Fanny Balbuk Yooreel in Government House gardens just across the road commemorates a Whadjuk Noongar woman born at Matagarup (Heirisson Island) in the early years of colonial settlement. She became famous for defying boundaries in early Perth walking through colonial houses as she travelled her usual routes to hunt and fish. The sculptors, Smith & Smith, also created another female

statue, The Waiting Woman, at the HMAS Sydney II memorial in Geraldton. Suzanne called for a greater representation of women in our sculptural landscape.

Alison Atkinson-Phillips spoke of the monument to the Vietnamese boat people, a ‘Monument of Gratitude’ in Northbridge for the refugees who died fleeing Vietnam and for those who found new lives here. Alison spoke of how community attitudes have broadened and developed more understanding since the 1960s as the refugees became settled members of the Perth community. Like the other statues, this one was no easy feat to finalise with extended disputes over where it would be located. It ended up in Wade St Reserve in Highgate and was not finalised until 2013.



Barbara Dundas



Suzanne John & Perpetua Durack Clancy



Margaret Bruce & Barbara Allen

Stories from the Storeroom

Catherine Anderson's feather-work picture Dorothy Erickson

This delightful feather-work picture was donated to the Society in 1929 by Mrs Edith Cowan who had purchased it for ten shillings at a Perth Red Cross sale in the same year. Edith Dircksey Cowan (1861-1932) was a founder of the WA Historical Society in 1926 and a leader in the first years of the Society's life. The newly established Society encouraged the formation of research groups to study Western Australia's past and Edith Cowan insisted on the crucial place of women's history in the Society's work. She led the formation of a Women's Research Circle at the Society, ensuring that women's histories were collected and told. Her donation of Catherine Anderson's feather-work picture to the Society's newly established museum collection is evidence of her delight and pride in women's accomplishments. Although the picture itself has no WA provenance, Edith Cowan's decision to purchase it at a Perth fundraising sale and immediately donate it to help establish a museum collection is testimony to her role in shaping the new Society. It speaks to her drive to instate women's history at the centre of the Society's historical life.

This feather-work picture was made in Victoria by governess Catherine Anderson between 1867 and 1885. Feather-work mosaics were a popular form of fine arts in the Victorian period, mostly depicting birds and flowers, and were used to decorate fire screens, mirror frames, hats, dress trimmings and such like.

The artist Catherine Anderson was a governess to the children of the Thomas Millear family at their property 'Edgarley', Willaura, near Ararat in Victoria. Tracing her story has been difficult as with many 19th century women when marriage was the ideal and unmarried women were little recorded. Catherine was typical of many governesses. For young women of good birth but from families unable to support unmarried daughters one of the only options for suitable employment was becoming a governess where they could pass on the skills they had been taught, such as needlework, painting, drawing and musical accomplishments, in return for genteel employment in a family home. Catherine was fortunate in finding employment with a wealthy colonial family who settled the western district of Victoria. At 'Edgarley' Thomas Millear grew wealthy breeding sheep and became one of the premier sheep breeders in Australia with a Merino stud Wonganella at Denilquin in NSW. Thomas and his wife Nancy née Mack whom he married in 1862 had five daughters, Millicent May, Frances Isobel, Mary Cecile, Annie Helen, and Carolina Alice. Thomas built the gracious blue stone house 'Edgarley' where they lived in 1877/8. It is listed by the National Trust and apparently little changed. Miss Anderson was the girls' governess.

We do not know Miss Anderson's place of birth or parents, only that she was well connected and an accomplished amateur artist who collected feathers to arrange into delightful framed floral compositions, some of which included watercolour details of butterflies and birds. Some of the feathers were collected by her pupils. In his 1885 diary the family's only son Thomas Jnr, aged 19, recorded that he 'shot parrots with Frank for Miss Anderson'. The surviving examples of her work have been dated as c1867-c1870 but some must have been as late as 1885. During an illness Miss Anderson convalesced with the Armitage family at Como House of Melbourne. She gave two examples of her feather work to the family, signed 'with best thanks'. Other examples of her work can be found in the collections of the National Trust of Victoria and the Ipswich Art Gallery. Another is in a private collection in Melbourne.

References

<https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Millear-6>

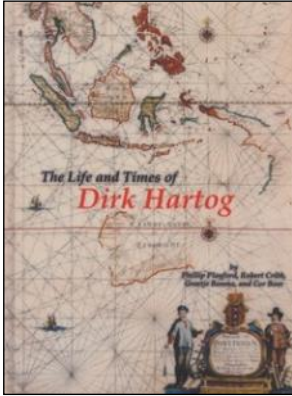
Correspondence 2018 from John McPhee, former NGA curator.



MA1900.226



Welcome back to Greetje Bouma & Cor Boer



Presenting digital recordings to librarian Jeanette Longwood with president Richard Offen

With old friends Lennie McCall & Margaret Medcalf

The Society recently welcomed Greetje Bouma & Cor Boer on their return to WA for a short visit. Members might recall that Greetje and Cor made an important contribution to the Society’s 2016 tercentennial publication *The Life and Times of Dirk Hartog* which we published to commemorate Hartog’s famous encounter with the Western Australian coast in 1616. Greetje and Cor undertook necessary research in Netherlands archives to write a chapter on the life of Dirk Hartog in collaboration with author Philip Playford. We remain grateful to our two Dutch friends for their involvement in this 2016 project.

Greetje and Cor had visited WA earlier in 2002. Western Australia’s maritime history, especially its connections to ships (and shipwrecks) of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), drew their interest and they were particularly influenced by reading Rupert Gerritsen’s *And Their Ghosts May Be Heard...* (Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1994). Gerritsen argued that some of the 200 or so shipwrecked Dutch sailors and passengers marooned on the WA coast survived and merged with local Aboriginal people ‘creating a new and unique civilisation’. It is a challenging argument but it captured Greetje and Cor’s imagination and they decided to travel north up the west coast to gather stories about Dutch/Aboriginal contacts. This trip resulted in a dozen shorter and longer filmed interviews with locals, famous and less famous, commenting the subject.

After 22 years most of those who were interviewed have died and Greetje and Cor decided that it is important, especially for Western Australia, to preserve these filmed interviews. So they have presented the Society with a copy of their filmed footage for documentation, education and research. We greatly appreciate this gift and warmly thank Greetje and Cor, and hope to see them again on a future visit.

Annual General Meeting 2024 Resolutions

Members who were unable to attend will wish to know that all the motions proposed (as detailed on page 1 of October’s *History West*) were unanimously supported.

The Society’s amended constitution has been submitted for ratification to the Consumer Protection Division of the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety.

The election of Office Bearers and Councillors for 2024/25 was adjourned until we have confirmation of acceptance of these constitutional changes.

Richard Offen, President

2026 RWAHS Affiliated Societies State History Conference

Can you assist?

The Society will host the State History Conference in 2026, which is also our centenary. We need to form a Host Committee and the work should start now. I have agreed to be convenor, and several councillors have offered their assistance. Please contact me if you would like to join this committee and help make the 2026 conference a memorable one!

Dr Fiona Bush, RWAHS Secretary & 2026 SHC Chair
secretary@histwest.org.au

Federation of Australian Historical Societies (FAHS) Report by Nick Drew

The FAHS held its AGM in October via Zoom. Councillors Nick Drew and Michael Nind were present as RWAHS delegates. The new president of the FAHS is Dr Rosalie Triolo (RVHS) with Christine Yeats (RAHS) Immediate Past President. Don Garden (HSNT) was elected Vice President, Ruth Kerr (RQHS) Hon. Secretary and Nick Drew (RWAHS) Hon. Treasurer.

Grateful thanks to all History West contributors without whom this year’s regular issues would not have been possible.

And particular thanks to our Community Officer, Lesley Burnett, and newsletter designer, Barry Sullivan, whose work and skills are essential every month.

from Ship to Shore

Alfred Gray – Man of the Cloth and Educator or ‘Humbug’? Bruce Hoar



This is the story of the Revd Alfred Gray who came to the Swan River Colony in 1853 as the ‘religious instructor’ to the convicts on board the ship *Pyrenees* (the same ship that brought the infamous Moondyne Joe to the colony). Gray wrote a diary of his voyage which was donated to the Historical Society in 1952 by Florence, the wife of his grandson (also Alfred) and is now in the Battye Library. A typescript copy is held in our Library. Supposedly a small revolver that Gray’s family gave him prior to his journey was also donated, but the revolver and any related records had not been found.



Investigating Gray’s story further came about as the result of two completely independent contacts made to the Society’s museum by members of different branches of the Gray family. The first contact came late last year from Greg Miles (Gray’s great great grandson) from Melbourne who was aware of the diary but was trying to track down the revolver. Coincidentally Erica van Lieven (Gray’s great great granddaughter) from Sydney contacted the Society a few months later to say that she had the revolver and wished to donate it to the Society. Greg and Erica were not known to each other.

Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News (WA : 1848 - 1892), Friday 1 July 1853, page 1

**COLLEGIATE INSTITUTION,
PERTH.**

UNDER THE CONDUCT OF
The Rev. A. GRAY, Ph.D., F.R.S., of London University.
ASSISTED BY
The Rev. T. CHARLESWORTH, Ph.D., M.A., St. Peter's College, Cambridge
AND
The Rev. J. LEONARD, M.A., London University.

LITURGICAL SERVICES:—
By the Rev. T. CHARLESWORTH.
By the Rev. J. LEONARD.

PHILOLOGY—
Latin, including Cicero and
Tacitus.
Greek.
Hebrew.
Sanskrit.
HISTORY—
Roman.
English.
GEOGRAPHY—
Physical.
Political.
Including Mapping and use of the
Globe.

By the Rev. J. LEONARD.
MATHEMATICS—
Arithmetic.
Algebra.
Geometry.
Trigonometry.
Natural Philosophy.
Astronomy.
Optics.
Acoustics.
Mechanics.
Chemistry.
Botany.
Zoology.
Mental Philosophy.
Political Economy.
Political Science.
Logic.
Metaphysics.
Natural History.

By the Rev. T. CHARLESWORTH.
By the Rev. J. LEONARD.

Residence under 8 years of age, 40 pence per annum.
Fifty pence, 10 to 14 do.
Day Pupils, 40 do. do.
Dresses—Cotton, Shirts, Drawings, each 3 pence per annum.
Fees and certificates of proficiency will be awarded according to merit generally.
Such young gentlemen as are qualified in any branch, a Latin, Greek, and account
keeping, which will be returned on demand.

On receipt of the revolver, and in consultation with Greg and Erica, further research was carried out on the life of Alfred Gray. The first item of interest was from Gray’s diary of his voyage and a letter to his brother with his first impressions of the colony on arrival. It was not very flattering, stating *‘Alas! thought I, this is not a land flowing with milk and honey, as represented’* and *‘This place looks a perfect desolation and wretched wilderness. All seems to be in a state of un-cultivation and an unfruitful barrenness brooded over all the land that met the eye’*. He told his brother that if there had been a ship to Melbourne available he would have left the colony immediately.

After some early struggles including being robbed of his savings of £73 in notes and gold, Gray acquired a house in St Georges Tce and went about establishing a ‘collegiate institution’ in partnership with a Revd Dr Charlesworth and Revd Leonard. By October 1853 he reports to his brother that he has ten students enrolled.

The success of this college is unknown but likely to have been short lived as the Revd Charlesworth was appointed a Congregational Minister in Guildford in March 1854 and the Revd Leonard left the colony in early 1856.

This is where the story becomes even more interesting. To date no record has been found of Gray’s religious training nor his claim to have a PhD from London University which was what he stated in his advertising for the new College. However it is likely he possessed a teaching qualification from the University College London.

Gray married his servant Sarah in June 1854 which caused quite a stir in the colony and then in October 1855 was appointed schoolmaster for the new Toodyay Primary School. In April 1856, Anglican Archdeacon John Wollaston visited the Toodyay school and was convinced Gray was a ‘humbug’, recording in his diary *‘One Grey – alias Rev Mr Grey, alias Dr Grey, who married his servant – is Master – pro tem, I hope. This is the same person who under the title of Rev’d Mr Grey MA (another alias) assisted by Dr Charlesworth (no Dr) opened a college at Perth – or rather tried to do so – by flaming advertisements of teaching the rising generation Hebrew, Greek, Latin, all the ologies etc etc etc, and by sporting College cap and great assurance. When I read these I felt sure the men were Hums – and so it turned out – the whole scheme is capped with smoke!’*

Wollaston was further annoyed when he attended a church service the next day where Mrs Gray *‘thought it was necessary to nurse her baby before the congregation with as much exhibition as a native woman’*. Not long after, Gray was dismissed as an imposter.

For the next few years Gray advertised for students to attend his ‘Classical and Commercial Academy’ in Perth and Fremantle. How successful these efforts were is unknown but in 1862 Gray and his wife and three children boarded the brig *Kestral* and sailed from Fremantle to Adelaide.

For the next fourteen years Gray was employed by the Education Department of South Australia and taught at number of country schools with some complimentary articles about his teaching printed in various local newspapers. He and Sarah went on to have five more children before he died in 1876, aged 52.

Descendants of Gray (including Greg and Erica) continue to research their family history and Gray’s life and training before coming to Australia.

Man of the Cloth and Educator...or ‘Humbug’? We may never be certain but we can now see that he was a sincere religious instructor and a man of some education who appears to have been wrongly accused of fraud by the Revd Wollaston.

from Ship to Shore

Sulphur Town cannonball & grape shot Bruce Hoar



Cannonball and grape shot
MA1938-22
Donor: Thomas Tapper

These iron cannonball and grape shot currently displayed in a maritime exhibit in the Society’s museum were believed to be found at Sulphur Town, Garden Island and donated to the Society by Thomas Tucker of Fremantle in 1937.

Garden Island was named *Ile de Bauche* by Nicholas Baudin during his maritime expedition in 1801. When Captain Charles Fremantle aboard the gunboat *Challenger* was sent ahead of Captain Stirling’s main party in 1829 he renamed the island Garden Island. Fremantle dug a well and prepared the place for the arrival of the first settlers from the *Parmelia* and *Sulphur*.

Sulphur Town, as it was named, served as the first settlement for Captain Stirling and some of the subsequent colonists until surveys of proposed land grants on the mainland in the Swan River Colony were completed. Initially it accommodated up to 400 people with the construction of huts, stores, stockyards, roads, gardens and wells. It was home to the first Government House and even saw WA’s first horse race

In 1834 the settlement (then mostly abandoned) came to an end when crew and some soldiers and their wives from the ship *Lonach* anchored offshore, came ashore and, after a few ales, burnt down the entire village. The local newspaper demanded the severest punishment, but by this time the *Lonach* had upped anchor and departed.

During the State’s 150th celebrations in 1979, a memorial to the early settlement was built at Cliff Head on the island overlooking Sulphur Bay.

Cannonballs and grape shot of the 19th century were made of iron. The original cannonballs from the Middle Ages were made of ground stone, but from the 16th century iron cannonballs proved easy to make and more accurate. They were typically classified by their poundage, referring to their weight and what size cannon could fire them. Grapeshot was a type of cannonball that was made up of multiple smaller balls like a giant shotgun shell. It was designed to be fired at close range and could inflict serious damage to an enemy ship’s crew.

* * * * *



Congratulations to our **bookkeeper Sarah Triplet** (Director, Irvine Direct) for her award of Emerging Bookkeeper of the year from the Institute of Certified Bookkeepers. Wonderful news & many thanks for all the hard work!

Sarah is second from left on this happy occasion.

Affiliates Newsletter

If you would like to read about Affiliates’ activities, please visit—

<https://histwest.org.au/affiliates-news/>

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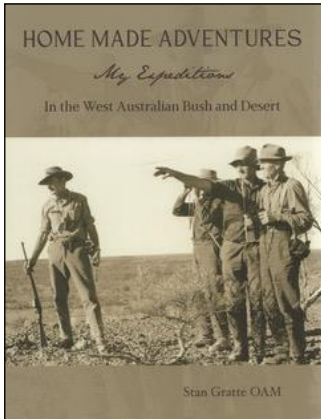


Realmark

Book Reviews

Stanley Gratte, *Home Made Adventures. My Expeditions in the West Australian Bush and Desert*, Hesperian Press, Perth, 2023. In Library.

Reviewer: Ed Jaggard



The eye-catching cover of this book, picturing four men including the author squinting into the sun in a desert landscape, vividly reflects its contents. The photograph is labelled, 'Looking for Forrest's Remarkable Peak', with Stanley Gratte, the leader of the expedition, pointing towards the horizon. There is a certain romanticism to this image

— explorers 'being the first that ever burst into that silent sea' (Coleridge) — but they are not, for this is not a volume about discovery. Instead it is one about the author following routes and guideposts in re-tracing several epic journeys in Western Australia's history

Gratte is a well-known Geraldton personality who has lived in the town since 1935 when he arrived from Mullewa as a young boy. Always adventurous, he explored his environs while engaged in several occupations before eventually becoming a highly successful poultry farmer. He immersed himself in town life, joining various clubs, then in the early 1960s became a founding member of the Geraldton Historical Society. Gratte had been bitten by the 'history bug' as he termed it, eventually becoming the Society's President from 1971 to 1994.

From the outset he encouraged members to enjoy physical evidence of the past, organising field trips along the coast and inland, the latter east as far as the Overland Telegraph. From 1966 to 2008 Gratte and members of the Society followed in the footsteps of Forrest, David Carnegie and Alfred Canning. Aided by welcoming station owners such as Bob Lefroy of Boolardy, 500 km east of Geraldton, and an Aboriginal worker on his farm, Gratte also voluntarily collected and recorded memoirs, local knowledge and languages of many Aboriginal people. These documents, tapes and films are now lodged with the Geraldton Regional Library while the Historical Society has an archive of more than 3000 photographs, many collected by Gratte.

Inadvertently, these activities aided Gratte on his expeditions, for he then enjoyed the co-operation of Indigenous people who were eager for contact with the remaining desert people, 'out there'.

More than ten expeditions were successfully undertaken, usually with the object of unearthing relics of the earlier explorers' presence; for example Chapter 14 (*Forrest's Bottle and Carnegie's Empress Spring*) and Chapter 18 (*Retracing David Carnegie, 1896*) with the parties comprising Gratte and a small number of

Society members. Where Forrest and others rode on horseback across the terrain, the Geraldton men travelled in four-wheel drive vehicles. Gratte was meticulous in his diary-keeping. Besides recording key dates, he listed quantities of fuel carried and consumed, kilometres covered and other details, but interestingly few if any comments about his companions. A feature of the diaries is the author's readiness to tell stories of people and places – to lapse into 'yarning' about topics only loosely connected to the journeys.

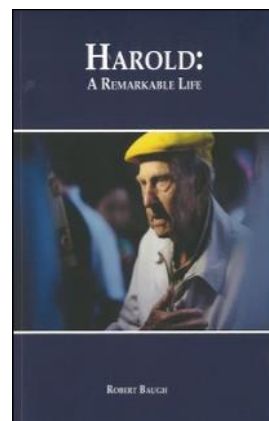
Ironically, early in the book Gratte while discussing a journey wrote, 'my reader can actually trace my journey on a map' (p. vi). It is a pity that author and publisher did not recognise that maps and text should be integrated in such a book. Also the absence of footnotes and references means that Gratte is reliant on personal knowledge and memory. On the other hand, the text is supported by numerous colour and black and white photographs together with two valuable indexes – People and Places.

Overall *Home Made Adventures*, part autobiography, part travel stories is a useful supplement to the existing literature on the exploration of the Murchison, and central desert areas of Western Australia. Written by a bushman who enjoys a yarn, it should be widely read.

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Robert Baugh, *Harold: A Remarkable Life, Data Documents*, 2024. In Library.

Reviewer: Pamela Statham Drew



This well written book is a moving tribute to a man whose life was 'remarkable' as the book's title states. Harold Martin believed he had a lucky gene to have survived the horrors of war, to have been successful in insisting on the place of prisoners of war in the Australian war legend and to have lived to the age of 103.

Born in 1917 to parents who had moved west for the goldrushes, Harold's childhood was spent on the goldfields with holidays in Esperance. Married in 1940 with a newborn son, he was not initially keen to enlist but, as the war news became more sombre, he signed up. He joined the armoured division in January 1942 and was assigned a vessel bound for Singapore. Unfortunately they ran straight into the battle for Singapore which fell in February 1942. The troops were taken prisoner and marched to Changi. Quotes from Harold's diary, which he kept throughout the war, are illuminating and horrifying.

After some months the fittest, including Harold, were sent to the Malayan Peninsula to work under harsh conditions. From there they were moved to Burma where they were told they would build a railway for Imperial Japan. Extreme workloads, very little water

and incessant heat undermined the health of man and beast, even the elephants succumbed. Dysentery, pellagra, beriberi and severe leg ulcers were common. Weary Dunlop's books about the construction of this railway are well known. What this book adds is what happened next: the nightmare journey that the fittest were sent on when the railway was completed in October 1943. Men were crowded into two ships to take supplies, including labour, back to Japan. Harold and his unit were on the *Rakuyo Maru*, which was torpedoed and sunk. Harold managed to survive on a makeshift raft until an American submarine rescued 73 of the survivors. Of the 1,318 POWs on the *Rakuyo Maru*, 159 were rescued by American submarines.

After the war Harold became a family man, changing jobs from the mines to a service station in Geraldton and a trucking business, even prospecting for gold. Increasingly he wanted the Australian War legend of fighting men to include the POWs who he felt had not been fully acknowledged. In 2009, aged 92, Harold visited California to see his rescue ship, the USS *Pampanito*, which had been converted into a museum. He presented his hosts with the American cap he had kept from the time he had been kitted out after the rescue. In 2012 he visited Myanmar to find the graves of his mates. He died at 103 in 2020.

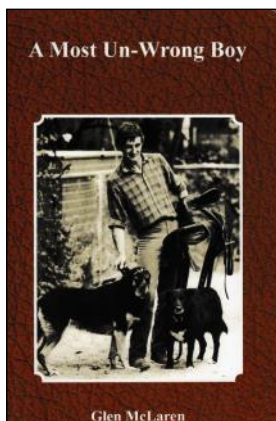
The book has four appendices which provide greater detail on the construction of the Burma Railway, on F Force, on POW subsistence claims and finally on the injustice meted out to former prisoners of war in Australia's delayed recognition of their wartime role.

This is an interesting book on an important subject which I recommend to readers.

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Glen McLaren, *A Most Un-Wrong Boy*, Glen McLaren, Albany, 2024. In Library.

Reviewer: Lenore Layman



Glen McLaren has written his life story for his sons to be read at the time in their lives when they are interested in their father's history. This is a far-sighted decision. So many of us regret that we failed to take more interest in our family's history when older members were alive and keen to reminisce. Often younger members' interest is not triggered until too late. Glen intends his memoir to

circumvent that situation, leaving this detailed account of his life to await his sons.

His is a life that has been lived mainly in the bush and particularly among horses. Not always a happy story but it is the author's honest recall. Glen's recollections are vivid and he sets his life down as he remembers it. He begins with his early years in Albany, telling of home, school and play. His memories are detailed and

sharp, and his likes and dislikes are recorded in lively manner. His major dislike was school where he was bored and unhappy; and where he responded by being disruptive. He sees his potential unrecognised and undeveloped but also suggests that his own inflexibility made him determined to do things his way. He described a school system that failed him. Schooling improved when he shifted for his last two years to Narrogin School of Agriculture. While he is critical of the school and many of its teachers, nevertheless here he began to learn and find areas of intellectual interest and some pleasure.

He hoped to become a farmer and began four years of farm work around the Great Southern district. These years turned out to be lonely and unrewarding although he worked desperately hard for over-long hours. His first job was as a farm worker at Mt Barker, harvesting oats and clover followed by seeding. Then he worked in a farm machinery business before trying his hand at clearing jarrah-mallee bush. He purchased a bulldozer and began what he hoped would be a successful small rural business. Life was hard, lonely and, in the end, not financially viable. He then joined a shearing team and worked around the State at shearing and crutching. None of these years of work paid off for him: he remained without much money and experienced long periods of loneliness. Above all, the life did not fulfil his interest or engage his mind. And so he decided on further study.

Then began Glen's satisfying years of working life, studying psychology and history at UWA while supporting himself riding track work for the racing industry and beginning what would later become a successful horse-breaking business. He enjoyed university study and achieved success but eventually decided to abandon his plan to become a clinical psychologist. Instead he developed his horse-breaking business at Belmont, and enjoyed the affinity he has with horses. Horse-breaking was hard and dangerous work but Glen built a livelihood from it until a major accident lost him half his foot which made it difficult to continue the business. His struggle for compensation from the Turf Club took six long years to resolve before eventually he secured financial compensation.

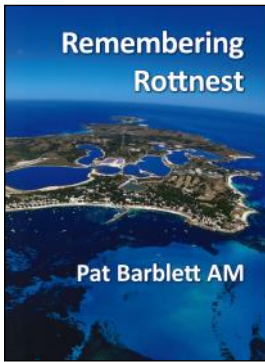
He titled the next chapter of his life story 'My true role'. It focuses on his return to academic study in Australian literature and society where he discovered the explorer Ludwig Leichhardt's Australian journeys and determined to research Leichhardt 'as a bushman, as a navigator and cartographer, and as a field scientist'. His doctoral research entailed a re-assessment of Leichhardt's bushmanship and techniques, re-tracing many of his routes and camping places on horseback and by trail bike. He delighted in the fieldwork in Queensland and the Northern Territory, and is proud of his academic and publishing successes. His major publications focus on the northern cattle industry — *Beyond Leichhardt: Bushcraft and the Exploration of Australia*; *Big Mobs: The Story of Australian Cattlemen*; and *A Long, Hard Road: A Centenary History of the Pastoralists and Graziers' Association of Western Australia*. Recently he has developed his property at Kalamunda and explored the pleasures of showjumping.

Glen's life has been lived on his own terms, holding firm to his beliefs whether popular or not. *A Most Un-Wrong Boy* clearly; as well as a most determined man. While this book will be of most interest to Glen's sons and his wider family but there is much to interest other readers, particularly about rural working life, the pastoral north before 1960, and the appeal of horses.

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Pat Barblett, *Remembering Rottnest*, self-published, 2024. In Library & Bookshop \$25.

Reviewer: Jeanette Longwood



Blue seas, white beaches, bakery buns, bike rides, fun with friends and family, swimming at the Basin — happy memories! Pat Barblett's book provides the context for the development of the organisation which enable such memories to be available for future generations.

The author has had a long-time commitment to conserving WA's natural and cultural environment. She is a long-standing member

and former Chair of the Rottnest Island Authority, the Conservation Commission, and a founder of FACET (Forum Advocating Cultural and Ecotourism). She was inducted into the State's Women's Hall of Fame in 2018.

Pat Barblett takes us into the events and places of Rottnest that she experienced over her decades of commitment & association. As stated in her dedication this book "... is not a historical thesis, it is my story of my love for a wonderful place." She effectively uses visuals and text to provide insights to a destination that so many people have enjoyed over generations. Her identified highlights of Rottnest include the first swim

of the season, riding to the West End, watching waves washing over Transit Reef and playing beach cricket. Chapters include an outline of the establishment of the Museum, the flow on effects to the administration of Rottnest due to changes in WA Government strategies, the beginnings of environmental awareness and the establishment of an environmental protection plan. In 1994 she saw a need for guides on the island which led to the creation of the Rottnest Voluntary Guides. In 2016 a Rottnest Foundation London Chapter was formed. She outlines the retaining of Hazel Hawke's memorabilia and her subsequent association with a book launch.

The book provides an interesting overview of the arrival to the island of de Vlamingh's small fleet in 1696 and his impressions of the island and adjacent mainland. Resultant of the tricentennial celebration of his arrival was the determination to re-stock the Swan River with swans, as by 1996 there were none on the river. The tricentennial was celebrated at length, involving Ambassadors, members of the WA Government and academics, and included a full-scale reenactment, a new postage stamp issued and a new coin minted.

She provides a very clear concise overview to the Australian Aboriginal presence on the island The imposition of British view of law and order on Australian Aboriginals across WA created the loss of social structure and ongoing social issues. The incarceration of Elders on Rottnest caused generational pain and dysfunction to their wider communities. Barblett expertly covers the intricacies of attempts and milestones to gain resolution for WA Aboriginal peoples about Wadjemup.

There is so much to enjoy in reading Barblett's book. It would be a pleasure to have it on hand, ready to pick up and read further about these interesting back stories to Rottnest Island.

Community Officer: Lesley Burnett
Editor *History West*: Dr Lenore Layman

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